

We, Peter Höfelmeyer and Martin Kull, deal with many different aspects of square dancing in our Caller Lounge (podcast on callerlounge.de, itunes, spotify, etc.); one important thread is "dancing". Our episodes on the dance style (2), "There's more to it" (5), the interview with Wade Driver (7) and most recently "Beat 1, the Hidden Champion" (14) deal with this. The basis of the movement is the dance step and with the following text we want to promote the right square dance step!

The

Square Dance Step

The basis of success!

Preliminary remark:

What is easily forgotten is that square dancing is a very complex affair.

The music has an average of 126 BPM (beats per minute). A figure with 4 steps takes just $((60 \cdot 4) / 126) = 1.9$ seconds. The dancer has to finish analyzing on which side he stands, with whom he goes in which direction and how far. AND he must already pay attention to the next call.

Now one could come to the conclusion that with all this stress one should not also pay attention to a correct dance step - keyword: simplification.

On the contrary, if you pay attention to the correct dance step from the beginning, you will automate this part very quickly and get through the square much easier!

With the following information and explanations we want to promote that the dance step is given great attention and that it remains an essential part of the training and is regularly "deepened" at club evenings.

1. Definition

Callerlab gives the following recommendation:

"DEFINITION OF STYLING TERMS

(...)

Dance Step: Should be a smooth, effortless gliding step in which the ball of the foot touches and slides across the surface of the floor before the heel is gently dropped to floor. The length of stride should be fairly short with the movement coming mostly from knees down. Dance step must be coordinated with the beat of the music. In general terms, short gliding steps that utilise both ball and heel of the foot make a comfortable dance step.

So the dance step is not a step at all in the real sense. The foot is only slightly pushed over the floor. This is how the shuffle step is created.

This shuffle step has one very important characteristic: it is small and almost identical in length for all dancers, regardless of their stature. Why is this important? Because square dancing is a formation dance, i.e. synchrony is important. The shuffle step guarantees that the dancers are moving at the same tempo, that the figures are executed simultaneously AND that the square does not get too big. In addition, this type of movement stabilizes the body substructure and the dance becomes calm and less prone to disruptions (no fidgeting back and forth).

A walking step (first the heel, then the ball of the foot) makes the square fall apart, end points are no longer reached at the same time, figure beginnings are different, the square collapses. Bouncing steps are equally critical!

Do the test: If a square breaks down, don't change anything except the request to observe the shuffle step and call the same sequence - Voila, it's magic!

2. What factors influence the correct execution of the shuffle step?

The condition of the floor and sole of the dance shoes - that is, the condition of the contact surfaces.

The shoe must be able to glide over the floor - a leather sole is ideal!

Now the objection comes that with the - from my point of view wrong shoes (rubber sole, etc.) - you would have a better grip on the turn. But it does not depend on that at all, if the step is executed correctly, then no large curve speeds develop at all. Then there will also be no tugging and tearing.

The right combination is the one that allows the foot to be pushed forward slightly without the sole "sticking" to the floor. Parquet + leather sole or short pile carpet + leather sole are better than indoor floor and sneakers. Of course, this also means that not every floor is suitable for dancing.

Where the rules of use of the hall prescribe certain shoes, this must of course be followed.

3. What is a mandatory part of the "step"?

The dancer's musical understanding, the sense of timing, so that the step is set correctly. This is also to be encouraged in exercises. The clapping of the men at the Ladies Chain is a "hidden exercise for this".

4. How to teach

The explanation of the dance step is done in several stages:

1. by showing/demonstrating,

2. by explanation (first the ball of the foot touches down, then the heel; the feet are not lifted strongly; it is a slurp),
3. by trial and error (Circle left/Circle right) - "listen for the sound",
4. by specific correction.

For the explanation of the dance step a short video can be distributed very well supplementing after the first class evening. For this purpose it is a good idea to note the mail address of the guests, this already binds more than a "Maybe we will see each other again next week".

Or why not have a mountain boot and a good dance shoe dressed side by side as a picture. Why not take off your shoes and put on 2 colored socks. The red sock shows how to do it right. With a picture like this, the caller can easily reinforce the memory of the training session.

Be creative - with a clear goal, improve the square dance!